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OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public
Health and Consumer Protection

on the report by Mr HARRIS on the European
Coastal Charter

Draftsman: Mr A. BOMBARD

On 4 February 1982 the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Mr Bombard draftsman of its opinion.

The draft opinion was considered at the meetings of 27 April and 25 May and unanimously adopted at the latter meeting.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Collins, chairman; Mr McCartin, vice-chairman; Mr Bombard, draftsman; Mr Alber, Mr Balfe (deputizing for Mrs Weber), Mr Berkhouwer, Mr Ghergo, Miss Hooper, Mrs Krouwel-Vlam, Mr Protopapadakis (deputizing for Mr Del Duca), Mr Remilly, Mrs Scrivener, Mrs Spaak, Mrs Squarcialupi, Mr Vandemeulebroucke and Mrs van Hemeldonck.

1. In essence the motion for a resolution asks that the Commission, in collaboration with the relevant committees of the European Parliament, should use the text of the European Coastal Charter and its programme of action drawn up by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of the EEC as the main instrument for the preparation of coordinated action to ensure the protection and development of Europe's coastal areas.

2. The Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Development, to which the matter was referred as the committee responsible, has reported in detail on the background and substance of the Charter and on the initial programme of action for 1982-1985 contained in the Charter.

3. The problems which arise in connection with the need to reconcile protection of the environment with the problems of development of the coastline can consequently be summarized as follows:

- (a) If such areas are to be spared and, indeed, play their full part in the Community's development, then it is essential that the conflicting demands of environment and development be reconciled through integrated development planning.
- (b) Environment policy overlaps with other Community and national policies in regard to coastal areas more often than elsewhere.
- (c) According to the Charter:
The coastline is a rare and fragile asset.
European coastal zones are experiencing increasing problems through erosion, pollution, industrialization, urbanization, destruction of natural ecosystems, over-fishing, under-employment and the exodus of young people.

The objectives of the Charter are:

- (1) developing a competitive and selective coastal economy;
- (2) protecting and exploiting the original character of each coastal zone;

- (3) organizing the coastal space;
- (4) administering the coastal area;
- (5) guarding against hazards;
- (6) controlling tourism;
- (7) disseminating information widely;
- (8) developing scientific research;
- (9) harmonizing European law;
- (10) developing international cooperation.

4. The objectives may thus be summarized as: 'finding the means to allow the reconciliation of the demands of development with those of protection encouraging integrated development while seeking to avoid past errors'.

5. As regards detailed proposals, the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning draws attention to the following measures:

- creation of a European environment fund;
- strengthening safety standards governing shipping and controls over dumping at sea;
- preventing pollution and nuisances deriving from past development;
- implementation of an ecological mapping programme;
- coordination and collaboration with research centres to combat pollution.

6. General considerations and observations

6.1. This whole range of objectives and actions to be undertaken is aimed at pooling experience, information and initiatives for the development and protection of the European coastline;

6.2. Our major task is to prevent as far as possible the deterioration of coastal areas. We feel it would be extremely useful to give priority to the coastal regions in the plan for ecological mapping. The directive on the assessment of the environmental impact (expected to be adopted) and the gradual inclusion of an ecological compatibility clause in regional and agricultural policies might constitute a first step in the right direction. The term 'ecological harmony' should

make us think first and foremost of the local population, since the ecological harmony of a region is normally determined by the protection and preservation of the identity, customs and traditional economy of that population.

6.3.(a)

In view of the fact that the North Sea and the Mediterranean in particular are increasingly resembling 'dustbins', we simply cannot fail to halt this scourge of the destruction of the environment. 75% of pollution of the coastal areas comes from the mainland. The rest, in deep-sea and offshore areas is caused by ships, collisions, dumping at sea or accidents at drilling rigs. The main task is thus to combat coastal pollution from sewers, urban, industrial and agricultural waste and effluent. We should not forget the fishermen of Minamata, victims of mercury poisoning, and the use of DDT which was banned several years ago but is still creating enormous havoc in deep-sea life. Furthermore, chemical pollutants accumulate in the links of the food chain.

6.3.(b)

Coastal pollution by tourists leaving their refuse behind them or using sea water for washing with chemical detergents, although certainly less significant in terms of the amounts and toxicity of the substances involved than the pollution referred to in paragraph 6.3.(a), still contributes just as much to the decline of coastal areas since it involves a high concentration of pollutants in a limited area and takes place on beaches, where the preservation of natural beauty is most important.

6.4.(a)

In order to reduce and eventually overcome pollution from land-based sources, according to the 'polluter pays' principle, it will be necessary to chart, with the aid of regional authorities, all sources of pollution and ensure that only effluents harmless to life are discharged into the marine environment.

6.4.(b)

It will also be necessary for national governments and local authorities to tighten up security on beaches so as to protect coastal areas against the secondary adverse effects of tourism. Existing security measures are not enforced strictly enough out of a desire not to discourage tourism. Such measures will also be immediately effective in reducing and preventing thefts of antiquities, trade in narcotics and the excessive incidence of violence, which contribute to the decline of coastal areas.

- 6.5. To achieve this, it may be essential (a) to set up or support university or private research centres and institutes of oceanography in the various regions of Europe which would function as centres for the protection and preservation of the coastal environment and for the collection and dissemination of information and (b) to improve coordination of measures and to ensure the strict application of existing directives or those about to come into effect, since by their binding force they have a far greater effect than any number of divergent recommendations.